District Review Report
Final

School District No. 59 (Peace River South)

April 22 - 24, 2003

Submitted to the Minister of Education

By District Review Team Chair
Ron Rubadeau, Superintendent SD No. 23 (Central Okanagan)

School District # 59 (Peace River South)
School District Review Report

District Name: Peace River South

District Number: 59

Superintendent: Mike Downey

Date of Visit: April 22 – April 24, 2003

Team Chair: Ron Rubadeau - Superintendent SD #23 Central Okanagan

Team Members:

Ron Allen – Assistant Superintendent SD #5
Judy Arnold – Manager, Ministry of Education
Dana Arthurs – Parent BCCPAC SD#79
May Jean Hay – Teacher SD #36
Jack Holly – Teacher SD #23
Ed Napier – Superintendent SD #28
Monica Pamer – Assistant Superintendent SD #38
Ted Perry – Principal SD #34

Context

Peace River South is a district of 5000 K-12 students in 23 schools. It is a diverse community that faces significant geographic and economic challenges. The district focuses on developing a respectful and inclusive culture. The citizens of the educational community are enthusiastic, committed and determined to improve student learning.

The Peace River South School District Review is one of twenty school district reviews being undertaken in the year 2002-2003.

The purpose of the District Review is to provide feedback and recommendations to the district, the Ministry of Education, and the public regarding the school district's work in improving student achievement by;

- reviewing district and school achievement data
- reviewing the district Accountability Contract and school plans to improve student achievement
- making recommendations to the Board and the Minister about improving student achievement; and identifying promising practices that will assist other districts and schools in their efforts to improve student achievement.

Summary of Process

Review Team Activities:

On the first morning of the review, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board and senior district staff presented an overview of the District.

A focus group was conducted with members of representatives of the stakeholder groups.

During the remainder of the visit, members of the District Review Team visited 12 of 23 district schools for approximately two hours each. At the schools, the team members met with teachers, administrators, members of PAC, DPAC, School Planning Councils, and other stakeholders.

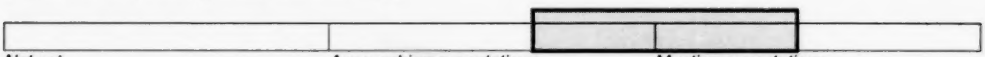
Schools Visits included: South Peace Secondary, Tremblay Elementary, Ecole Frank Ross Elementary, Canalta Elementary, Chetwynd Secondary, Tate Creek Elementary, Dokie Elementary, Devereaux Elementary, Tumbler Ridge Elementary, Parkhill Elementary, Moberly Lake Elementary, and Parkland Elementary

Additional data considered: As well as the District's performance plan and school improvement plans, the District Review Team considered the District Key Information binder, the Ministry Performance Report, and the Satisfaction Survey Report.

Acknowledgements: The District Review Team members appreciated the open, positive and professional approach encountered throughout the District. District, school personnel, and parents were well prepared to discuss the schools' plans and to work towards the achievement of stated goals. The Team wishes to thank School District #59 for its time and gracious hospitality. The Team commends the community for its passion and commitment to students.

Observations in Key Areas - Focus on Student Achievement

1. Goals:
   Improving districts have a strong instructional focus. This focus is made visible in clear goals for improving student learning.

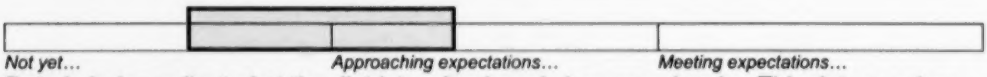


   Goals are linked to student learning. There are encouraging signs that district and school goals are thoughtful and evidence based.

2. *Rationale:*
   Improving districts have a thorough and connected set of reasons based on evidence for the selection of their student achievement goals.

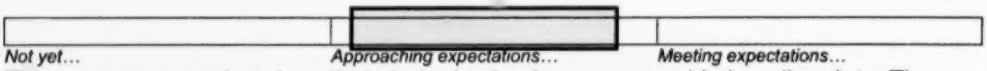
There is evidence that the selection of the district and school goals is based on a growing understanding of student needs.

3. *Data:*
Improving districts are actively considering at least three sources of evidence including classroom, school and district / provincial data. The analysis of this evidence has informed the selection of the district goals.



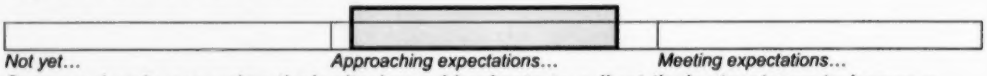
Data is being collected at the district, school, and classroom levels. This data requires critical analysis so that deliberative decisions are made in relation to goals and strategies.

4. *Strategies:*
Improving districts have a well-organized, focused improvement plan in place. The strategies selected to achieve the goals are an intelligent blend of research, best practice, and innovative thinking.



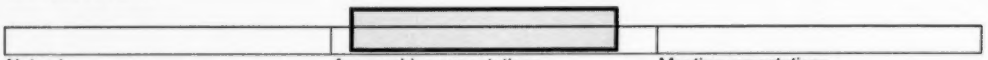
There are encouraging signs that strategies in place may provide baseline data. The district is encouraged to use these strategies to improve student achievement.

5. *Structures:*
Improving districts have aligned structures – resources, time, and organizations – to get the results they want. This includes effectively differentiating resources in the areas of highest need for improvement.



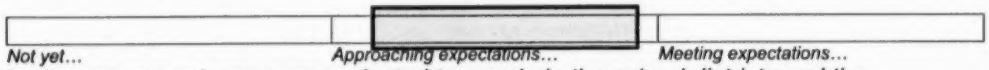
Some schools are using their site-based budgets to adjust their structures to improve student learning. The District Leadership Team supports and enhances the District's focus on student achievement goals.

6. *Results:*
Improving districts get improved student learning results – at the classroom, school and district levels.



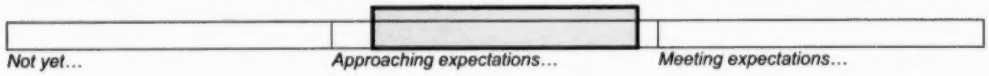
There are encouraging signs that classroom and school results are improving. Performance targets and trend data are being established. This data will assist in improving student results.

7. *Communication:*
Improving districts communicate and make public their improvement goals and the progress being made.



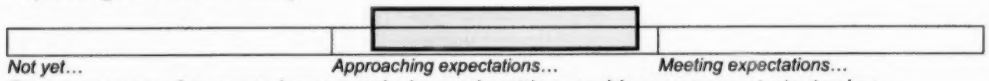
Improvement goals are communicated to people in the school districts and the community. It is not clear that progress towards the achievement of goals is being communicated.

8. *Teamwork: - District and School Coherence*
Improving districts have a dynamic and interactive strategy for connecting school and district goals. School uniqueness and school district directions are both valued.



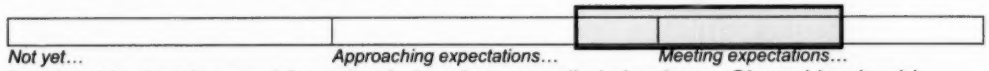
School goal and district goals are aligned. The work of the district leadership teams will enhance the connection.

9. *Teamwork: - District and Parent Involvement*
Improving districts work as a team with parents, including specific groups of parents, on improving student learning.



Some groups of parents have a role in goal-setting and improvement strategies. Connections with the Aboriginal community are encouraged.

10. *Leadership / Teamwork:*
Improving districts are led by district leaders with a clear vision for, and commitment to school improvement and improving student achievement. Principals, vice principals, teacher, parent and student leadership is encouraged and systematically developed – with a focus on improving student learning.



Leadership development for school planning councils is in place. Shared leadership involves the commitment of the teachers, principals, and district staff in leadership teams to address student learning.

Strengths

This district has many strengths. In particular, the review team noted the following:

- a genuine commitment to students
- the alignment of professional development opportunities with district goals
- the alignment of school budgets with district goals
- the development of a sustained, long-term quality professional improvement program
- the high priority given by the district leadership team to student learning
- the large number of quality alternate education programs
- the recognition by the district leadership team of school uniqueness in developing school goals
- the systemic approach to collecting classroom data
- the initiatives to expanding the capacity of teachers to assume leadership in the development of district goals.

Promising Practices

The review team identifies the following programs and/or practices as potentially helpful to other districts:

- the development of district partnerships with BCIT and Northern Lights College
- the creation of district leadership teams with large numbers of educators assigned to address each goal area
- the encouragement of class meetings as a strategy to teach social responsibility
- the creation of a protocols to assess work habits and employability skills
- the assistance provided to students to translate social responsibility performance standards into "kid friendly" rubrics
- the alignment of Webster's Stylistic Techniques with writing performance standards
- the development of teacher workshops emphasizing the economic, language, social, and cultural impact of poverty on students.

Recommendations

We respectfully suggest the district consider:

- Limiting district objectives and strategies to those that have the greatest impact on student achievement.
- Renewing and refocusing efforts to improve Aboriginal student achievement.
- Improving the skills of teachers and parents to use data in the decision-making process.
- Developing new ways to involve all partners in roles that enhance student achievement.

Follow Up (to be determined by Ministry of Education)

Required follow-up, with specific time frame, may take the form of:

- Ministry phone call
- Deputy Minister visit
- District report to the Ministry
- Review of the next year's district contract
- Special Advisor appointment